

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0120

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINR, PINT, IT
SUBJECT: IL GIORNALE DIRECTOR MONTANELLI ON THE POLITICAL
SITUATION

1. INDRO MONTANELLI, DIRECTOR OF ITALY'S SECOND MOST IMPORTANT
POLITICAL DAILY, AND A GREAT SHOWMAN, IS AN ANTI-COMMUNIST, PRO-
DEMOCRATIC AND ANTI-CLERICAL. DURING A DISCUSSION WITH CONGEN
JANUARY 19TH HE HAD THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE NATIONAL
POLITICAL SITUATION.

2. ANDREOTTI IS AS MUCH AT HOME IN THE CONFUSED POLITICAL SITUA-
TION AS A FISH IN WATER. HE POSITIVELY THRIVES ON THE AMBIGUITY
AND THERE IS CERTAINLY NO OTHER ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADER
AS ADROIT. HOWEVER, SAID MONTANELLI, ANDREOTTI IS A TOTAL
CYNIC WITH NO ATTACHMENT WHATSOEVER TO ANY POLITICAL
CONVICTION. HE IS THE SORT OF PERSON WHO, IF HE DECIDED THAT A
DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE, WOULD CONCLUDE
THAT NO ONE WERE BETTER PREPARED TO DO IT THAN HIMSELF. BUT,
SAID MONTANELLI, AS LONG AS HE'S ON OUR SIDE, YOU COULDN'T
HAVE A BETTER MAN IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. THE PROBLEM IS, HE
ADDED WRYLY, WE DON'T KNOW WHETHER HE'S ON OUR SIDE OR NOT.

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3. NEVERTHELESS, HE CONTINUED, WHETHER ANDREOTTI MIGHT WANT TO
DO IT OR NOT, THERE IS NO PROSPECT AT ALL IN THE PRESENT SIT-

UTATION FOR A DEAL WITH THE COMMUNISTS THAT WOULD BRING THEM INTO THE
GOVERNMENT. THE ONE VERY POSITIVE THING THAT HAS HAPPENED
DURING THE PERIOD OF SORTING OUT SINCE THE JUNE 1976 ELECTIONS IS

THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT HAVE NOW COMMITTED THEMSELVES UNEQUIVOCALLY TO OPPOSITION TO RIDING WITH THE COMMUNISTS. THAT, WAS AN IMPROVEMENT IN THE SITUATION FOR WHICH HE CLAIMED SOME CREDIT.

4. ANDREOTTI WAS CERTAINLY NOT HIS IDEA OF THE RIGHT MAN TO BE ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER. ON THE OTHER HAND, MONTANELLI FOUND HIMSELF IN THE SAME POSITION AS THE COMMUNIST. IF ANDREOTTI WENT, WHO WOULD REPLACE HIM? THE AFTER-ANDREOTTI PHASE OF ITALIAN POLITICS IS TILL A TOTAL MYSTERY TO POLITICAL PRACTITIONERS HERE. AND IN THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING BETTER, MONTANELLI SAID HE COULD SEE NO CHOICE BUT TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT ANDREOTTI.

5. AS FOR THE COMMUNISTS, HE PROFESSED TOTAL IGNORANCE ABOUT WHAT MIGHT BE GOING ON WITHIN THE PARTY. THE SIMPLE FACT WAS, HE SAID, THAT WE KNEW WHAT THEY WANT TO TELL US AND NOTHING ELSE. THEY CONTINUED THEIR POLICY OF SWEETNESS AND LIGHT DESIGNED TO DISARM THE MIDDLE CLASS. WHY, HE LAUGHED, THEY EVEN OFFERED TO PRINT IL GIORNALE ON THE PRESSES OF L'UNITA* AND THEY TOLD US THAT WE COULD BE SURE THAT THERE WOULD BE NO INTERRUPTIONS FROM WILDCAT STRIKES* THERE IS NO END OF FAVORS THE COMMUNISTS WOULD BE PREPARED TO DO FOR US, HE GRINNED, IF WE WERE ONLY GRACIOUS ENOUGH TO ACCEPT.

6. HE DID THINK THAT THE PCI WAS HAVING TROUBLES WITH THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. NOT SO MUCH WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE CGIL, WHICH WAS LOYAL TO PARTY LEADERSHIP, BUT WITH THE RANK AND FILE WHICH MIGHT BE A LITTLE UNDEPENDABLE. BUT EVEN THAT WAS VERY DIFFICULT TO MEASURE. THE FACT WAS, HOWEVER, THAT THE COMMUNISTS

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WERE JUST AS SCARED OF ELECTIONS AS WERE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND WOULD GO TO CONSIDERABLE EXTREMES TO AVOID THEM. SO HE DIDN'T THINK THAT THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT WAS IN PARTICULAR DANGER FROM THE COMMUNISTS DESPITE THEIR DIFFICULTIES WITH THE TRADE UNIONS.

7. THE THREAT OF ELECTIONS IN FACT, SAID MONTANELLI, IS ONE OF THE MOST VALUABLE ASSETS THAT ANDREOTTI POSSESSES. HE BLACKMAILS COMMUNISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS EVEN HANDEDLY AND DESPITE THE EAGERNESS OF FANFANI, MORO AND EVEN FURLANI TO DISPOSE OF HIM, HE HAS BECOME THE IRREPLACEABLE MAN. AS FOR ZACCAGNINI, MONTANELLI ROLLED HIS EYES AND DISMISSED HIM AS A DECEN MAN BUT ONE WHO IN POLITICAL TERMS WAS ALL IMAGE AND NO SUBSTANCE. IT WAS A TREMENDOUS FRUSTRATION TO ALL THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WHO WANTED TO BRING ABOUT SOME REAL REFORM IN THE PARTY AND TO STRENGTHEN ITS ORGANIZATION TO FIND THE ZACCAGNINI WAS A KIND OF ABSENTEE PARTY SECRETARY WHO WAS ACCOMPLISHING NOTHING IN FACT. WHILE THAT MIGHT MAKE IT EASIER FOR ANDREOTTI TO STAY IN POWER, SINCE HE HAD NO REAL COMPETITION AT THE PARTY LEVEL, IT ALSO

MEANT THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY WAS MARKING TIME.

8. IN CLOSING, MONTANELLI UNDERSCORED THE IMPORTANCE THAT THE NEW AMERICAN AMBASSADOR WOULD HAVE IN INFLUENCING WHETHER THE COMMUNISTS WOULD COME TO POWER IN ITALY OR NOT. IT WAS IMPORTANT, HE SAID, TO REALIZE THAT THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN ITALY PROBABLY HAD MORE INFLUENCE UPON THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE THAN ANYWHERE ELSE IN EUROPE. HIS VIEWS AND HIS ADVICE, ARE GOING TO BE SOUGHT ON EVERY SIDE AND VERY CAREFULLY INTERPRETED. DON'T FORGET, ADMONISHED MONTANELLI, THAT THE ONLY WAY THAT THE COMMUNISTS CAN ENTER THE GOVERNMENT OF ITALY IS IF THEY CAN SAY THAT THE AMERICANS APPROVE OF THAT HAPPENING. NOT THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD OR NEED INTERVENE TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE. THE ITALIANS THEMSELVES WOULD NEVER LET IT HAPPEN IF THEY KNEW THE UNITED STATES WERE OPPOSED TO IT.FINA

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